

Mythical Helpers in English and Uzbek Fairy Tales

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Abstract: *This article discusses specific features of epic helpers in English and Uzbek fairy tales. Both nations` folklore contain mythical helpers in the shape of dragons, extraordinary creatures, mythical birds, giants and etc. However, the difference in the image of such helpers is enormous. Because, each nation is unique and has the culture, traditions, beliefs, lifestyle and religion of their own.*

Keywords: *Folklore, motif, protagonist, helper, animal helper, magical helper, mythical helper, dragon, giant, mythical bird, elf, fairy.*

While reading folklore samples of different nations we come across mythical animals like the dragon, magic animals like the truth-telling bird, animals with human traits, animal kingdoms, weddings, and the like. Then there are the many helpful or grateful beasts, marriages of animals to human beings, and other fanciful ideas about animals [2,1614].

Giants, elves, fairies, brownies, boggarts, ogres, trolls, mythical birds and other creatures appear in the form of helper in English fairy tales. Fairies act as a helper in the English fairy tales, such as Red Ettin, The three Wishes, The Black Bull of Norrøway, and etc [4,11].

A group of characters in Uzbek folklore directly related to mythology differs from other types of mythical images in that they come as the patron, supernatural helper and assistant of the epic hero. Giant, fairy and Hizr can be among such patrons.

In Uzbek fairy tale “Five Daughters” Hizr appears as a patron and guides a blind hero to the right path. The main hero saves the life of a white snake that comes out to be a fairy. As a reward, the fairy enchants her 2 sisters and turns them into 2 dogs for disobedience [15, 43].

Many scholars of the world have studied mythology from different aspects. An American folklorist Stith Thompson distinguished the taxonomy of mythical animals in his “Motif Index of Folk Literature” and analyzed them under 9 categories.

Some cultures deemed birds important in their mythology, legend, and folktale tradition, believing that they possess powers of prophecy and associating them with gods. The roc, phoenix, and griffin are examples of such birds. They are seen to possess the ability to talk, offering guidance to humans, guarding treasures, and sending messages to gods [17,138]. In an English folk tale “The Rose Tree” the spirit of a girl comes back in the form of a little white bird, speaks to human-beings and takes revenge from the stepmother who had killed her [7,43].

Stories of fabulous birds have parallels with stories of the garuda of India, the simorgh of Persia, the anka of Arabia and Turkey, the feng-huang of China, and the bennu of Egypt.

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The simorgh, the wise old bird of Persian folklore, is said to have lived on the Mountain Kaf for thousands of years. By some accounts it is immortal and is said to have a nest in the Tree of Knowledge. The name means “thirty birds” and it is said that simorgh is so old that it has seen the destruction of the world three times over.

In Middle Eastern traditions, the anka is depicted as a bird of huge size, large enough to carry an elephant. It has a long life span, approximately 1,700 years. At the end of its life, it burns itself and rises again. The Arabs believed that it was a creation of God, originally a perfect bird [14,417].

In Uzbek fairytale “Qahramon” (“The Hero”) the protagonist releases 12 giants and these giants help in defeating the enemy. An old man, who is 170 years old acts as a patron and advises to save simorgh’s nestlings from the dragon. Simorgh, the huge bird carries the hero over dark river to a distant land and helps him to defeat the giants [5,134].

The marriage or love between a human and one whose form is that of a magical or enchanted animal is a motif used from earliest times in the mythology and folklore of peoples from every part of the world. Among these animals are birds, dogs, goats, bears, horses, bulls, fish, crocodiles, and snakes. In an English fairy tale Nix Nought Nothing giant’s daughter helps her lover -a man and defeats her father. In the end, they marry and be happy [3, 91].

Some folk tales focus on transformation, and have happy endings, in which the animal metamorphoses into a princess or prince. The Grimms’ tale of “The Frog Prince” and Madame de Beaumont’s “Beauty and the Beast” are classic examples of this pattern [9,18].

An English fairy tale “The Well of the World’s End” tells a story of an enchanted frog who was saved by a kind girl Rosemary. At first, the frog helps the girl to take water to her stepmother. But in case if the girl will serve him for a day. After some time the frog appears and reminds about the promise. All day long the girl will be in his service. Next morning, the frog asks to cut his head off and turns into a handsome man. In spite of the stepmother’s disapproval, the guy marries the girl and takes her to distant countries [11, 68] .

Mythology plays an integral part in every civilization throughout the world. Mythical images in fairy tales attract millions of readers, particularly, children with their magical features probably because of their inexistence in real life.

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